

PRESS RELEASE

# Baker-Polito Administration Highlights Housing Choice Bill in Grafton

Local leaders endorse legislation that aims to support communities statewide in their goals to increase new housing production

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

5/09/2019

Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development

Housing and Community Development

MEDIA CONTACT

---

**Colleen Arons , Director of Communications and Public Affairs, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development**

**Phone**

857-324-0499 (tel:8573240499)

**Online**

[colleen.arons@mass.gov](mailto:colleen.arons@mass.gov) (mailto:colleen.arons@mass.gov)



**GRAFTON** — Today, Lt. Governor Karyn Polito joined Grafton Town Administrator Tim McNerney, Board of Selectmen Chairman Sargon Hanna, Representative David Muradian and other local leaders to highlight *An Act to Promote Housing Choices*, [legislation filed by Governor Baker in February](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__mass.us20.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3Dd76848d6925ee08d7a5fe3097-26id-3D1d8b177cc0-26e-3D0656e)

[that calls for targeted zoning reform to advance new housing production in Massachusetts and support the Administration’s goal to produce 135,000 new housing units by 2025.](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__mass.us20.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3Dd76848d6925ee08d7a5fe3097-26id-3D1d8b177cc0-26e-3D0656e)

Today’s event at Mill Villages Park recognized efforts to boost housing production in Grafton, a 2018 Housing Choice Community designee for successfully adopting best practices and increasing the housing stock by more than 3 percent in the last five years. The park abuts the former site of Fisherville Mill, which the town voted to convert into a 40R Smart Growth Zoning overlay district permitting up to 240 units. The Housing Choice bill currently before the Legislature would make it easier for the town to continue to take on similar projects.

Grafton Selectman Ed Prisby, Central Mass Regional Planning Commission Executive Director Janet Pierce, and Gene Bernat, CEO of The Fisherville Redevelopment Company, joined Board of Selectmen Chairman Hanna in endorsing the legislation in the lead up to the [May 14<sup>th</sup> Joint Committee on Housing hearing](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__mass.us20.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3Dd76848d6925ee08d7a5fe3097-26id-3Dc81d34cde8-26e-3D0656e)

[“Our Administration has worked hard to tackle the housing shortage in Massachusetts, investing more than \\$1 billion into the affordable housing ecosystem and using a variety of programs to advance thousands of new, market-rate housing units,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “Increasing the housing stock is critical to the growth of the Commonwealth’s communities and economy, and needs to be addressed by modernizing zoning laws with our Housing Choice legislation.”](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__mass.us20.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3Dd76848d6925ee08d7a5fe3097-26id-3Dc81d34cde8-26e-3D0656e)

"I am pleased to be here in Grafton to highlight a community that is leading the way on promoting housing for its residents, as production statewide per year has fallen below half its 1980's levels," **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito**. "Governor Baker and I applaud the town's proactive approach to the current shortage, and look forward to taking the same path in promoting Housing Choice in order to reverse this trend."

The legislative proposal will enable cities and towns to adopt certain zoning best practices related to housing production by a simple majority vote, rather than the current two-thirds supermajority. While this legislation will lower the voting threshold to change zoning for all communities in the Commonwealth, it does not require cities and towns to make any of these changes. With the proposed simple majority threshold, municipalities that pursue rezoning efforts including those enabling transit-oriented or downtown-oriented new housing, would gain approval if they achieve more than 50 percent of the vote, as opposed to the current super majority of more than 66 percent. Massachusetts is currently one of only a few states to require a supermajority to change local zoning.

Zoning changes that promote best practices for housing growth that would qualify for the simple majority threshold include:

- Building mixed-use, multi-family, and starter homes, and adopting 40R "Smart Growth" zoning in town centers and near transit.
- Allowing the development of accessory dwelling units, or "in-law" apartments.
- Approving Smart Growth or Starter Homes districts that put housing near existing activity centers.
- Granting increased density through a special permit process.
- Allowing for the transfer of development rights and enacting natural resource protection zoning.
- Reducing parking requirements and dimensional requirements, such as minimum lot sizes.

This legislation also includes a provision, added by the Joint Committee on Housing last session, that would reduce the voting threshold for a special permit issued by a local permit granting authority to a simple majority vote, for certain multi-family or mixed-use projects with at least 10 percent affordable units in locations near transit or, in centers of commercial activity within a municipality.

"Massachusetts is home to the country's best-educated workforce, but also its most expensive housing," **said Housing and Economic Development Secretary Mike Kennealy**. "Our Housing Choice legislation would empower the production necessary to reduce housing costs, delivering relief to families while helping retain talent and securing economic growth. We look forward to working with our partners in the Legislature to make sure it passes this session."

The legislation is part of the administration's [\*\*Housing Choice Initiative\*\*](#)

[https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A\\_\\_mass.us20.list-2Dmanage.com\\_track\\_click-3Fu-3Dd76848d6925ee08d7a5fe3097-26id-3Dcfc438beb1-26e-3D0656](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__mass.us20.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3Dd76848d6925ee08d7a5fe3097-26id-3Dcfc438beb1-26e-3D0656)

which provides incentives, technical assistance, and capital grant funding to encourage new housing production that meets the long-term needs of the Commonwealth's growing, and aging, population.

"Our families, seniors, workforce, individuals with disabilities, and vulnerable populations have diverse housing needs, and today's market is not meeting them. Housing that our residents can afford is a crucial resource and *An Act to Promote Housing Choices* will create the tools we need to promote new housing development for those across incomes," **said Acting Undersecretary of Housing and Community Development Jennifer Maddox**. "We are proud of the coalition we've built in support of this legislation and the investments we've made in affordable housing, community development, and public housing to benefit the many communities which contribute to our strong, inclusive Commonwealth."

"Grafton recognizes the importance of diverse housing opportunities in creating a strong and vibrant community," **said Tim McInerney, Grafton Town Administrator**. "The work of the Baker-Polito Administration through the Housing Choice Bill will support Grafton's efforts to who have supported Grafton's efforts to improve housing opportunities, rejuvenate village centers, and encourage development that meets smart growth principals such as our efforts to develop the Grafton State Hospital as a transit oriented village."

"While housing supply is desperately low in the Commonwealth, housing demand is at an all time high. Thanks to the Baker-Polito

administration, the implementation of the Act to Promote Housing Choice will not only help alleviate this problem, but will also help support our growing population," **said Sargon Hanna, Chair of the Grafton Board of Selectmen.**

"Adequate, available and affordable housing is so lacking in the northeastern United States, particularly in Massachusetts, there isn't a facet of our lives that isn't deleteriously affected," **said Ed Prisby, Member of the Grafton Board of Selectmen.** "From our employment needs, to our family lives, to our environment and to our own ability to pursue our individual dreams, adequate housing – once a cornerstone of the American experience – is slipping away from an entire generation of people. The time has come to act to avert this burgeoning crisis."

"CMRPC recognizes the need for additional diverse housing opportunities for all age groups within our region. The Baker-Polito Administration's *Act to Promote Housing Choices* provides opportunities to increase the housing production needed to support our growing regional economy in an environmentally sound way," **said Janet Pierce, Executive Director of the Central Mass Regional Planning Commission.**

"The scarcity of diverse, affordable housing options is creating a growing impediment to improving the quality of life and economic opportunities of the residents of our communities. Proactive legislative efforts to promote housing choice and mixed use development are critical for the maintenance of healthy, stable and diverse communities and a vibrant state economy," **said Gene Bernat, CEO of The Fisherville Redevelopment Company.** "The Fisherville Mill project in South Grafton is an example of a community supported redevelopment effort enabled through legislative action allowing zoning flexibility. Rezoning of the site to permit the construction of 240 residential units and 60,000 square feet of commercial space has provided the economic value required to enable the cleanup of a hazardous waste site and creation of a public park while addressing a shortage of affordable housing within the community. Enacting legislation to enable more communities to permit the development of similar projects has enormous potential to increase affordable housing stock while preserving open space, reducing urban sprawl, revitalizing aging town centers and remediating degraded industrial properties."

"The Town of Grafton has taken important steps to preserve existing housing options, and to support the growth of housing opportunities in the community," **said Senator Michael O. Moore (D-Millbury).** "Housing Choice Communities, including Grafton, continue to work hard to build and strengthen our neighborhoods, and to help ensure families have a place to call home. Thank you to the Administration for their ongoing support of housing initiatives here in heart of our Commonwealth."

"The Governor's proposed legislation would provide crucial support to communities, such as Grafton, in developing more housing choices for low-income families, the elderly, or disabled," **said Representative David Muradian (R-Grafton).** "I am eager to see the progress of this bill as it makes its way through the legislature. I also want to thank the Baker-Polito Administration for their continued dedication in bettering the Commonwealth."

The Baker-Polito Administration has shown a deep commitment to increasing the production of housing across income levels. Since 2015, the administration has invested more than \$1 billion in affordable housing, resulting in the production and preservation of more than 17,000 housing units, including 15,000 affordable units. [\*\*In 2018, Governor Baker signed the largest housing bond bill\*\*](#)

([https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A\\_\\_mass.us20.list-2Dmanage.com\\_track\\_click-3Fu-3Dd76848d6925ee08d7a5fe3097-26id-3D8f1ccf7fa0-26e-3D0656e](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__mass.us20.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3Dd76848d6925ee08d7a5fe3097-26id-3D8f1ccf7fa0-26e-3D0656e)

Massachusetts history, committing more than \$1.8 billion to the future of affordable housing production and preservation. The Baker-Polito Administration has also advanced the development of more than 11,000 mixed-income housing units through the successful [\*\*MassWorks Infrastructure Program\*\*](#)

([https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A\\_\\_mass.us20.list-2Dmanage.com\\_track\\_click-3Fu-3Dd76848d6925ee08d7a5fe3097-26id-3D9c13d1313e-26e-3D0656e](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__mass.us20.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3Dd76848d6925ee08d7a5fe3097-26id-3D9c13d1313e-26e-3D0656e)

reformed the [\*\*Housing Development Incentive Program\*\*](#)

([https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A\\_\\_mass.us20.list-2Dmanage.com\\_track\\_click-3Fu-3Dd76848d6925ee08d7a5fe3097-26id-3D683a86ea6d-26e-3D0656e](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__mass.us20.list-2Dmanage.com_track_click-3Fu-3Dd76848d6925ee08d7a5fe3097-26id-3D683a86ea6d-26e-3D0656e)

and worked with communities to implement smart-growth development and planning efforts.

###

###

## Media Contact

**Colleen Arons , Director of Communications and Public Affairs, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development**

### Phone

857-324-0499 (tel:8573240499)

### Online

[colleen.arons@mass.gov](mailto:colleen.arons@mass.gov) (mailto:colleen.arons@mass.gov)

**Samantha Kaufman, Deputy Director of Communications**

### Online

[samantha.kaufman@mass.gov](mailto:samantha.kaufman@mass.gov) (mailto:samantha.kaufman@mass.gov)

### Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development

[\(/orgs/executive-office-of-housing-and-economic-development\)](/orgs/executive-office-of-housing-and-economic-development)

The Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development promotes vibrant communities, growing businesses, and a strong middle class.

**More** [\(/orgs/executive-office-of-housing-and-economic-development\)](/orgs/executive-office-of-housing-and-economic-development)



**Housing and Community Development** [\(/orgs/housing-and-community-development\)](/orgs/housing-and-community-development)

DHCD oversees funding and resources to help people in Massachusetts live affordably and safely.

**More** [\(/orgs/housing-and-community-development\)](/orgs/housing-and-community-development)

Did you find what you were looking for on this webpage? \*

☐ Yes ☐ No